

SUMERIAN MYTHOLOGY



Adrian Ambrose

Sumerian Mythology
A Collection of Ancient Sumerian Myths and Epics

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Introduction

I want to thank you and congratulate you for downloading the book, *“Sumerian Mythology: A Collection of Ancient Sumerian Myths and Epics”*. If you enjoy the following tale of mythology and epics as told by Adrian Ambrose please make sure to claim another one of his books for free as a special thank you for your purchase! The offer follows the end of this book.

The relationship and search for God, gods, or goddesses is one of civilized man's earliest preoccupations. Our place in the universe is anything but certain and with that uncertainty comes the need for explanation and a yearning for understanding. It has always been the enigma of man to explain, theorize, or pontificate upon that which the obvious solution evades us. After a few millennia and exponential advancements in science and math we have definitively explained much of what was once inexplicable. Yet we still find ourselves fascinated with the intricate and creative myths of ancient man. This book is a figurative ode to Ancient Mesopotamia and the great impact and influence they still hold on today's cultures.

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This book is a collection of varying myths and epics of the Ancient Sumerian civilization. The Sumerian culture is deeply rooted in myth and mystery. Their influence is greatly seen in all of Ancient Mesopotamian civilizations and many argue they played a heavy hand in forming the theology of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This book is a tribute to the tales of old, from the cradle of civilization, which has seemingly long been forgotten. It is the figurative ode to Ancient Sumeria and Mesopotamia and the great impact and influence they still hold on today's cultures. I hope you enjoy the compilation of the following tales of mythology!

Thanks again for downloading this book, I hope you enjoy it!

Chapter 1: The Creation of the World

In the beginning, the skies and the earth were yet unnamed.

In the beginning, all the waters of the world mingled.

In the beginning, there was nothing but chaos.

From all this chaos, the twin primordial beings were born. They were Tiamat, the goddess queen who was salt water personified, and Apsu, the king god of fresh water. But they had mixed their waters together and thought not of green lands nor human beings nor beasts that roam the land. Therefore, in the beginning, non-existent names failed to cross non-existent lips. Non-existent days failed to roll into non-existent years. In the beginning, no gods nor heroes nor destinies nor stories were manifest.

And then, Apsu mated with Tiamat and together they raised a family of gods. The twin primordials gave birth to Lahmu and Lahamu and with their birth, names were finally pronounced. Lahmu and Lahamu, in turn, gave birth to Anshar and Kishar. With each generation, the gods grew mightier and surpassed their forefathers.

Anshar and Kishar's first-born was An. An was to be the father of all gods. Together with Enki and Enlil, they shall form the triad of deities. The horned Anu fathered not just the gods, but also the demons and the evil spirits. He also fathered Nudimmud, whom he had shaped according to his very image and likeness. This child of An's was far more superior to his ancestors. None of his peers rivaled him. That is, until the birth of Marduk.

And so, these gods would meet inside Tiamat's oceanic womb where they would create such a racket. This disturbed Tiamat deeply. However, like all mothers, she indulged her young and complained not of the discomfort they caused her.

Then Apsu, the begetter of all the gods felt otherwise. He could not bring it upon himself to ignore the noise caused by his sons and the sons of their sons. Apsu turned to his wife and declared that he shall destroy all the gods that they have created so that he and she will be able to restore the peace in their lives. At this, Tiamat screamed with rage. She told him: *"How can we destroy that which we ourselves have fashioned into being?"*

Then, Tiamat calmed herself and tried to suppress the evil brewing inside her belly. However, her brother and husband resolved to carry out his plot. The truth is that it deeply troubled Apsu that the family of younger gods whom he had raised will eventually wage war against him and usurp his throne.

Enki, the god of mischief, was the one who found out about Apsu's plan to destroy them. He himself devised a plan of his own. Using a spell, he caused the waters to be still. He then cast a spell of slumber upon Apsu. Then, Enki stripped the primordial god of his belt, his crown, and his mantle of radiance and placed these items upon himself. Finally, he held the king god, the father of his fathers, down and killed him in his sleep. Then, Enki built his home atop the corpse of Apsu where he rested in his splendid chambers with his lover.

From the dead Apsu's body, Enki's son rose, fully matured, and was born into being. He was called Marduk, the god of storm. He had four eyes and four ears and when he opened his mouth, flames blazed forth. Radiant was the mantle that he wore above his head. Above him were five great rays. Marduk's form was powerful and proud and his stare was so piercing that even the god An was filled with joy at his sight, which is why An created the four winds and placed them in Marduk's hands so that the new god may control them.

Of this, the young god Marduk fashioned whirlwinds and flood waves which disturbed Tiamat's belly. Day and night, the primordial queen goddess heaved. The other gods complained to their mother.

"All this is happening," they said. "Because you chose to stand by helplessly as your husband was slain. And so the dead Apsu fashioned these four frightening winds in vengeance!"

They appealed to her sense of motherhood. They begged her to take action, to wage war against the gods residing inside her deceased husband's body and to avenge the death of Apsu.

Tiamat listened and was pleased with the proposition. And so the gods plotted day and night and prepared themselves for war. They consulted Mother Hubur, she who fashions all things, and with her help, they created eleven monsters. There were giant serpents with fierce fangs. There were dragons sheathed in rays so fearsome that those who look at them would tremble at their sight. These monsters resembled a rabid dog, a scorpion, a fish, a bull, a lion... but in countenance, they were all godlike. They bore fearsome weapons of destruction and in their veins surged venom instead of blood.

While a benevolent mother, Tiamat was a fearsome fighter. When angered, she was even crueler than her dead husband. She appointed her son, Kingu as consort and general of her army and gave him powers equal to those of An's. To Kingu's breast, she pressed the Tablet of Destinies and then told her son that his word shall be law. He had the power to rule the destinies of gods, their sons, and their sons after them. She told him that once he has given the word, it shall not be altered. Then she filled her son with venom strong enough to paralyze even the powerful.

When Enki was told of Tiamat's plan for war, he was stunned. Then, he became furious. He came to his forefather, Anshar and spoke to him about Tiamat's plan. He spoke angrily:

"See how the mother who created us is now rejecting us? And see, father, how the traitorous gods whom you produced are fighting beside her?"

In despair, Anshar advised his son: "This is but the consequence of your brutal murder of Apsu."

Gravely, he told Enki that he had brought it upon himself.

Enki harrumphed and sought Tiamat's strategy. Alas! It was too much for him and he returned home with even less hope than before. Once again, the dejected Enki consulted his forefather Anshar. Anshar spoke before the Anunnaki, the group of gods, and asked:

"Who among you is brave enough to attempt what Enki had not been able to fulfill?"

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All of the gods sat silently. The room was as still as death. Not one of them volunteered to be the champion. For who, indeed, would be foolish enough to face Tiamat's wrath?

Then, through the silence, rumbled the thunder-like voice of the god Marduk. "I shall fight this war," he said. "And before long, my forefather Anshar, you shall set your foot upon Tiamat's neck."

Hearing this filled Anshar with joy. He kissed Marduk on the lips and gave him his blessing. And so the storm god, clad in awesome armor, rode off in the storm chariot. And his last words were:

"Enjoy your banquet. Fill your bellies with your choice of wine. For when I return after I have slain Tiamat, let it be that my own words shall fix fate. My utterances shall not be altered by anything or anyone. And my decree shall not be changed."

Before the battle, Marduk called upon the four winds: North, East, South, and West, and from them fashioned a powerful net. Marduk was provided by the gods with an impressive assortment of weapons, but his weapon of choice was his bow and arrow. When he marched off to war, lightning bolts flashed in front of him and his body was filled with fire.

When the champion Marduk fought with Tiamat, she had transformed herself into a giant sea serpent. The seething primordial queen goddess was out of control. When Tiamat opened her lips, her breath were plumes of poisonous smoke. Fortunately, the champion was prepared for that. The wise Marduk carried with him magic herbs to counter the poison's effects.

Face to face with Tiamat, he said: "What kind of a mother are you to lay destruction over your offspring? Even when they killed your lover to save themselves, how can you be so devoid of compassion?"

In truth, it was Marduk's plan to confuse Tiamat, to enrage her so that may lose what little control she had left. Upon hearing his words, Tiamat brought down the full force of her fury onto her opponent. She advanced towards him with all her power. As she engaged, Marduk encircled a net of wind around Tiamat. She screamed in fury and as she opened her lips, she swallowed the imhullu wind, the evil wind which Marduk blew into her face. Her lips became paralyzed so that she was unable to close them. More and more, the wind entered her mouth and filled her belly. Her stomach grew so distended that her insides stretched as she suffered. Then, almost like an act of mercy, Marduk's arrow thudded into her belly, deflating her stomach. And as the wind escaped her gut like air seeping from a punctured balloon, the life trickled out of her.

Marduk threw down Tiamat's corpse. Seeing their mother leader defeated, her regiments trembled in fear. The gods who fought by the queen mother's side started to run away. Alas! They had nowhere to run or hide. So though the champion god spared their lives, the traitorous gods were bound and thrown into the mighty Marduk's net. Marduk collected the enemy gods' weapons of destruction and smashed them. As for the monsters, he tied their limbs and clamped their pernicious maws with nose-ropes. He pulled them like the lowly beasts of burden that they were.

Only one of the deities was bold enough to face Marduk after this and that was Tiamat's lover and son, Kingu. However, Marduk, with his bow in one hand and his mace in another, also beat Kingu whereupon the latter kissed the storm god's feet in submission and became his slave. Marduk stripped Kingu of all his powers and titles. Lastly, he snatched from his chest the Tablet of Destinies and claimed them as his own. He impressed his own seal upon the tablets and afterwards, he pressed them upon his own breast.

Marduk raised his mace and smashed it against the skull of the dead Tiamat. Her blood splattered and the Northern wind carried particles of her lifeblood towards Anshar and the Anunnaki to tell the news of the queen mother's defeat.

In the end, Tiamat's body was sundered with the storm god's knife. Marduk created wonders out of her filleted flesh. He hung one half of her body up to form the boundless firmament. He contained her once unruly waters, separating them into units that are more manageable. From her spittle, he created clouds that scudded across the horizon. From her venom, he created fog. He made mountains out of her nipples. And from the empty orbits of her eyes, water gushed forth and became the Euphrates and the Tigris. He raised Apsu, which was now Nudimmud's dwelling. He created stands for the gods, designing constellations for each of them.

So from Tiamat's split corpse, Marduk formed the heaven and the earth. When heaven and earth were separated from each other, An took the heavens with him. Enlil, in turn, took the earth.

Marduk created the night to mark the days. Then he created the years. Hence, Marduk created order in the world. And as for the beloved champion, he came home to find a kingly shrine awaiting him. A royal aura crowned his head. The Anunnaki rejoiced in his victory and declared:

"You, Marduk, are among the greatest of the gods.

Henceforth, your command is law.

No utterance of yours shall be altered.

No decree of yours shall be falsified.

And no gods shall disobey your boundaries."

The gods bestowed upon Marduk dominion of the entire universe.

This was the story of Marduk's ascent from son to champion to King. But more importantly, this was the story of the creation of the world.

Chapter 2: The Creation of Man

This is the story of how man was created and how he missed his chance for immortality. This is how until today, man is vulnerable to the whims of the winds. This is how until today, he lives by the sweat of his brow. And this is how, until today, his wife screams in pain to give birth to his descendants.

The gods, at first, bore not much difference from men today. There was a time when the mighty beings were in the ways of men. They toiled the earth to make it suitable for habitation. They mined the earth's minerals and they planted crops to provide for themselves.

By and by, the gods grew tired of the labor and so they mutinied. They consulted An, father of the gods, who in turn, consulted his son, Enki. The god of water and wisdom and mischief said:

"Indeed, the labor of the gods is too much to bear."

So he thought about it well and came to this conclusion:

"I believe we must fashion slave creatures to take over our work for us!"

And so the idea of man was born.

However, in order to do this, Enki needed living blood and bone to create new life from. And so the great gods convened.

They asked each other: "Who shall we sacrifice?"

In the end, they agreed that he who had sinned against his fellow gods shall be executed so that his blood and bones may become the foundation of this new slave race.

Marduk's captive servant, Kingu, who once led the war against the gods as a commander in Tiamat's army was brought before all the gods. With the approval of the great gods, Enki raised his blade and cut off Kingu's head. Then, he mixed the deceased former god's flesh and bone with clay and shaped the first human beings according to the gods' image and likeness.

However, Enki believed that man should not be completely the same as the gods. Thus, when he breathed the breath of life into his creations, he limited their life span. All this, the clever god of mischief performed in Eden, a flat landscape, the garden of the gods which was situated in the middle of the Euphrates and the Tigris.

And so the new slave race toiled the earth. They mined minerals. They planted crops. They took water from the rivers to nourish the parched lands. With their bare hands, man provided for the gods. In turn, the gods provided man with sustenance.

There was, however, a flaw in the first human being's structure. They were unable to reproduce. Enki rectified the matter by making a few modifications in the anatomy of man. This, however, he did without first consulting his brother god, Enlil. From then on, the enraged god became the adversary of man. He made sure that humankind suffered through every aspect of their lives, from bearing their young to working for their food. Moreover, he made them vulnerable to the wickedness of the wind.

One of the first men was named Adapa, a king. Seeing the suffering of his people, he longed to have an audience with the father of the gods. One day, his prayers were finally answered. The South wind overturned his boat and the king was thrown into the sea. In retaliation, the angry mortal unsheathed his blade and severed one of the South wind's wings. The wind howled violently for a while and when the awful screaming stopped, there was nothing but stillness.

In his palatial dwelling, the father of gods noticed that the South wind no longer blew.

"It has been like this for seven days," he said. "Who is responsible for this? I must see him and punish him as I see fit!"

Upon discovering that this was due to the doings of a mortal, he demanded that Adapa be brought before him.

His creator, Enki appeared before the mortal to assist him in his ascension to the godly dwelling of An. The god provided him with advice on how to get through the guardians of the gates.

Before Adapa was brought before An's presence, Enki gave him a warning:

"He will offer you oil and you may anoint yourself with that. Other than that, do not take anything that An offers you for he will ask you to eat the bread of death and to drink the water of death."

Adapa promised that he shall take neither.

At the gates, Adapa flattered the two guardians, Gishida and Tammuz. He was wearing black garments then.

"Why," the guardians asked, "are you clad in black?"

To this, Adapa answered:

"Ah, my lords, it is to mourn the disappearance of two great gods from the earth."

By this, he was referring to the two guardians and they were immensely pleased. Enki's advice worked and not before long, the mortal king was brought before the father of gods.

When he was finally face to face with An, he was nearly blinded by his splendor. An asked him:

"Why, mortal, had you cut off the South wind's wing?"

To which Adapa humbly answered: "God of gods, I was simply catching fish for my people when the wind had cruelly capsized my vessel."

To his relief, the god deemed his actions as fair. He then seized the opportunity to relay to the father of gods the suffering of his people. Thereupon An offered him oil and food to eat and water to drink. Adapa, remembering Enki's advice, anointed himself with the oil but refused the god's offering of food and drink.

The god no longer repeated his offer.

"Foolish mortal," he thought. "Oh to reject a great god's offering! As such, he and his sons, and the sons of his sons must truly deserve to live the rest of their lives in suffering."

For in fact, the god had offered Adapa the bread of life and the water of life. By doing so, he had offered immortality to all of mankind.

Alas! It was Enki, the god of mischief and wisdom who believed in his heart that human beings should never be immortal. For though he made the human race, he believed that they should be separate from the gods. Otherwise, the entire purpose of their creation would be all for naught. And so he gave the false advice to Adapa.

Chapter 3: The Great Flood

No mortal was to be granted the gift of immortality, the god of wisdom and mischief Enki made sure of that. But Utnapishtim's fate was unique from the rest of his mortal kin. How tragic it was though, that his godly position began with events that led to the death of many, many men...

Despite the suffering of man, their kind grew in numbers. Seeing this, the gods grew worried. They began to fear an uprising.

“What will happen,” they thought, “if man no longer became content with working for us?”

And so the deities convened. Finally, it was agreed upon that they shall take measures to cut the mortals' numbers.

The god Enlil, who was only too pleased to seek ways on how to bring suffering to mankind, spearheaded the population control campaign and devised ingenious ways on how to murder entire populations. He sent plagues. He sent famines.

Alas! Men died but the children they had fathered grew. Mothers buried their sons but soon gave birth to more. Mankind kept growing and growing. Finally, out of frustration and fear and fury, the gods decided to send one great flood that will wipe out humanity from the face of the earth. The great gods An, Enlil, and Enki all agreed on this.

“This is the only way we can start again,” they reasoned to each other.

However, as the creator of the primordial man, Enki did not wish to see his creation go to waste. And so he appeared before his mortal servant Utnapishtim whilst he was in a reed house. And on the reed wall, he revealed to the mortal the gods' plans for destroying the land. The god then commanded the terrified mortal to destroy his house and build a boat large and sturdy enough to keep living beings safe. He instructed Utnapishtim regarding the precise measurements and design. The mortal then vowed to the god to do as he commanded.

Even so, the man worried about what the people would think of him. Furthermore, he worried about what the elders would say. Enki then instructed him to tell the people this:

“Alas I had displeased the god Enlil. Therefore, the lord rejected me and I may no longer live in the city. As for the boat, it is because I shall live in a fresh water marsh near the water god Enki's temple.”

And so Utnapishtim gathered carpenters and reed laborers to commence the building of the great boat. Finally, when Utnapishtim's boat was finished, the man loaded all of his gold and silver into it. He also ushered into the boat all the living beings that he owned, from his wife to his craftsmen to his beasts of burden and different species of field animals. Then, when the god instructed him, Utnapishtim had sealed the doors of his vessel.

The storm came early in the morning. It poured in torrents and the people were frightened. The thunder god roared and sent little children weeping into their mother's bosoms. The Anunnaki illuminated the heaven and the earth with terrifying lightning. And even grown men felt the fear, understanding finally that this was no ordinary rain.

The South wind, which regained its wings, blew ferociously. The water came down like blows from a thousand fists, punching the earth. The rain beat on people's bodies, causing them to scream and fall to the ground with the tremendous force.

Soon, all was blackness. The entire land had been shattered into insignificance. All of earth, flattened. Even the gods were frightened with what they had done. The mortals' bloated bodies filled the water like dead fish. They fled from the flood and returned to An's heavenly abode. Together, they wept.

This went on for six days and six nights. And on the seventh day, there were sporadic rains. When the sea of death and destruction finally calmed and when the whirlwinds have ceased in displaying their wrath, there was nothing but stillness.

And as for mankind, they became as they were before... nothing but clay.

When Utnapishtim finally opened the window of his great boat, he felt the fresh breeze whisper against his face. It spoke of promise. It spoke of hope. And the chosen one fell to his knees and wept.

From his collection of creatures, he took a dove and released it.

“Bring good news to me by never returning,” he said.

Alas! The bird came back to him.

After days of waiting, Utnapishtim took a swallow and freed it.

Bring good news to me by never returning,” he said.

But like the dove, the bird circled back to his vessel.

Finally, he took a raven and set it free.

Bring good news to me by never returning,” he said.

This time, the bird did not come back. This was how he knew that raven had found a home.

Utnapishtim soon found the shore and then sent all of his creatures in different directions.

The hero then took one of his sheep and offered it as a sacrifice to the gods. He lighted some incense and the gods flocked around him and rejoiced over his sacrifice. Enlil, on the other hand, was livid.

“Where,” he roared, “did this mortal escape to? No one was meant to survive the storm!”

To this, Enki responded:

“Brother, have you completely forgotten your compassion? The punishment you have thought of was too severe that it had caused even the other gods to weep.”

Enki, wise god of mischief, then immediately denied having anything to do with the leakage of Enlil's plan. Nevertheless, he did admit to send Utnapishtim a dream about what might occur.

Enki finally came up with a solution for mankind's reproduction. He proposed that the fertility of females be given a limit.

“Furthermore,” said he. “Let there be women who are barren. Let there be demons who snatch away the babes from their wombs. Let us have maidens consecrate themselves to us so they would have to vow to remain virgins.”

Utnapishtim and his wife were then granted immortality by the gods and allowed to dwell at the mouth of the rivers where they are safe from these new hardships created for the new breed of man.

Chapter 4: The Epic of Gilgamesh

The tale of Utnapishtim and the earth before the great storm would have all been forgotten had it not been for his chance acquaintance with a brave explorer called Gilgamesh...

Gilgamesh Dreams of Enkidu

In the ancient Sumerian city of Uruk, there lived a demigod named Gilgamesh. He was the son of the mortal Lugalbanda and a minor goddess, Ninsun. He built and beautified this great city, building temples for An, the father of the gods and his daughter, Inanna, the goddess of love and war. He irrigated the fields, dug wells, and made orchards. Gilgamesh was the handsomest and bravest of all men. He was also the strongest. Humility and kindness, however, were not his strongest features.

He took immense pride in his superior qualities and hosted endless sporting events where he would beat every single young man in the city. He would sacrifice his warriors' lives on a whim. And despite his good looks, he would molest his men's wives. He took what he wanted whenever he wanted it and woe to he who stood in his way.

The elders of the city of Uruk complained:

"Is he not our king? And isn't it the duty of the king to protect and care for his people as a shepherd would of his sheep? But no, our king harasses us as though he were a wild ox!"

The inhabitants of the city had no other choice but to turn to the gods for help. The father of the gods, An heard their collective cries. He said to Aruru, the goddess of creation:

"You who have created Gilgamesh and had given him his superior qualities are responsible for him. I therefore command you to create another human being equal to Gilgamesh in skill and strength to teach him humility."

And so, from the image of An, Aruru fashioned a man, Enkidu, from clay.

The knowledge of his rival came to Gilgamesh in a dream. The young man dreamt that a great rock fell from the heavens. He tried to lift it. Alas! It was too heavy for him. Then, he tried to move it. Alas! It would not even budge. Then, all of the citizens of Uruk gathered around this miraculous meteor from heaven. They all carried it and placed it upon Gilgamesh's shoulder as though saying that it is now his responsibility. Then, Gilgamesh carried it to his goddess mother.

Awakening from the dream, Gilgamesh ran to his goddess mother and told her all about it for she was very wise and knew how to interpret visions.

"Oh my son," said she. "I believe that the rock that fell from the heavens is no other than your match."

"My match?" Gilgamesh asked, puzzled. "But no man is equal to me."

"Ah but there is, my son," said Ninsun. "And he was born not here but out there in the open country, reared by the mountains. You shall bring him to me."

The king thought nothing of it. But when he went back to sleep, Gilgamesh had another dream. He dreamt that an axe fell from the heavens. The people flocked around it and admired it. He picked it up and took care of it. He loved it and was loyal to it as though it were a living being.

Once again, the goddess interpreted the dream: "You shall meet your match. He shall be equal to you in every way and you shall love him dearly."

Stubborn Gilgamesh refused to believe all this for he cannot fathom the thought of meeting someone equal to him in skill and in strength.

The Wild Man and the Harlot

A hunter wandered off into a watering hole and saw a wild man so huge and hairy drinking there. The hunter ran home to his father declaring that he shall no longer be a hunter.

The man's father calmed him down.

"Don't be a fool," he said. "If it is indeed a man then go to the city of Uruk and beg the king Gilgamesh so that you may borrow one of the temple harlots. Surely, the feminine prowess is too great for any man to resist, even if he is a huge and hirsute beast."

The hunter reluctantly obeyed his father and went back to the wilderness with the prostitute. By the watering hole, they waited for three days.

It turned out that the wild creature they had been waiting for was no other than Enkidu, the man who was created to be Gilgamesh's equal, he who would humble the arrogant king. When he finally arrived, the prostitute, following the hunter's instructions, lay on a blanket and revealed her breasts to Enkidu. Driven with lust, the wild man mated with her for six days and seven nights. In the heat of passion, he had momentarily forgotten the open country which used to be his home.

The harlot, whose name was Shamkat said to Enkidu:

"How godlike you are! Why do you go about the open country as if you were a wild animal? Come with me, will you not? Come with me to the city of Uruk where the land is spacious and where you will be amongst your kind."

"What?" Enkidu responded. "Are we done making love?"

At this, he got up and tried to go with the wild animals. However, it seemed that they no longer looked upon him as their kin. He tried to run with them but he felt that his strength had diminished. Confused, he went back to Shamkat who once again persuaded him to return with her to civilization. Then, like a goddess, she took his hand and took him to dwell in a shepherd's hut.

Enkidu who used to drink milk from the teats of wild beasts was now given bread and beer. And though at first, he knew not what to do with them, he tasted the food and drank the beverage and found that it was good. He filled his stomach with bread and drank seven whole jars of beer. He became merry just like any other man. He dressed himself in clothes just like any other man. He placed a weapon in his hand just like any other man. He protected the sheep and the shepherds from the lions and the other men respected him for it. And just like any other man, he made love to his Shamkat.

Gilgamesh and Enkidu Meets

One day, Enkidu notices a man who appeared to be in a great hurry.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

To this, the man answered excitedly: "I'm off to the houses of the fathers-in-law."

"And what is that?" the once wild man asked.

“It is where men choose their daughters-in-law. And then Gilgamesh, the king of Uruk will impregnate the bride-to-be before the husband does.”

At Enkidu’s evident shock and confusion, the young man answered:

“Such was the destiny given to him by the gods from the very day that his umbilical cord was cut.”

He hadn’t been staying long in civilized society but to touch a bride before the husband does! This was very wrong in Enkidu’s eyes. Enkidu had long heard about the excesses of Gilgamesh from Shamkat. The temple harlot had told him that while Gilgamesh can indeed be callous, he was also very lonely.

“He has no equal in Uruk.” she said. “And as such, he has no real friends.”

Enkidu made up his mind to go with the young man to the city of Uruk so that he may teach this Gilgamesh a lesson. Shamkat tried to prevent him from going, saying that the king of Uruk is so much stronger than Enkidu. Nevertheless, he went. And the temple harlot followed behind him.

The moment Enkidu stormed through the gates of Uruk, the people flocked around him. They gaped at the foreigner in admiration.

They said:

“Is he not very like our king? Although he is shorter, he has very strong bones! Indeed, our king has finally met his match.”

Gilgamesh was just about to enter a bride-to-be’s chambers when Enkidu blocked his path.

Enraged, Gilgamesh shouted at the foreigner. “Who do you think you are, to stand in the way of my lust? Don’t you know who I am?”

Then and there, the two mighty men wrestled.

As they grappled, the walls shook and the doorframe was destroyed.

In the end, Gilgamesh won. But the two bore respect and admiration for each other. They kissed and became friends. Finally, Gilgamesh had found a worthy companion for his adventures.

The Humbaba

The first of Gilgamesh’s and Enkidu’s epic adventures was the slaying of the ogre Humbaba. The Humbaba dwelled in the Cedar Forest and was placed there by the god Enlil himself to prevent mortals from entering the forest. The Humbaba was a horrible and mighty monster who never rested nor slept. The Humbaba’s word was fire and his breath was death. At first, Enkidu disliked the idea. He declared: “This is an impossible mission!”

To this, Gilgamesh answered:

“Do you fear death, my friend? Ah but there is no escaping the clutches of death. Even if we lose the battle with this ogre, then at least we shall win our fame. Come, are you not heroic enough? You who grew up wrestling with lions?”

And so the two had the blacksmiths of Uruk fashion weapons and armors for them. They set off on this quest even against the advice of the elders of Uruk. However, before leaving, Gilgamesh visited his mother’s temple. He asked Ninsun to speak on his behalf to the sun god, Shamash so that he may protect the two friends in their quest. To this, the goddess agreed and went up the rooftop to pray to the sun god.

Gilgamesh and Enkidu were no ordinary men and thus, in their travel, they covered within one day a distance that would take ordinary mortals one month and a half to reach. Before laying his head to rest, Gilgamesh climbed a mountain and prayed directly to the sun god.

The sun god talked to Gilgamesh through a dream. Then he awoke and related to his friend what he had seen:

“I had a terrible nightmare. In my vision, I saw the mountain fall on top of us.”

At this, his friend reassured him:

“Do not think that this is a bad omen. On the contrary, this means that we will slay the monster. The mountain, you see, represents the Humbaba. And he shall fall.”

Then, Gilgamesh and Enkidu continued with their journey.

Gilgamesh continued to experience night terrors and Enkidu continuously reassured him with auspicious interpretations.

By the time the two friends arrived at the edge of the Cedar Forest, it was Gilgamesh’s turn to tremble. He wept and sought Shamash’s help. At this, the sun god himself appeared before the two men and told them to stop delaying.

He said:

“Now is the best time to strike! For though the Humbaba usually wears seven layers of armor, at this moment, he has only one!”

At this, the two men made their move. They marched into the forest, the ogre’s lair. When they found the Humbaba, the beast berated the king for choosing someone like Enkidu for his companion.

“He is a nobody!” the fiend said. “A nobody who sprung from the loins of no one.”

Then, the ogre’s face shifted so that it grew ten times more horrid than before. Gilgamesh was about to retreat, but Enkidu’s words gave him strength. He reminded the king of the axes, the bows and quivers, and the daggers that the blacksmiths of Uruk had fashioned for them.

The sun god acted quickly and gave the mortals his assistance. He sent thirteen powerful winds that blew from all directions. The winds raged and blasted their fury upon the monster. So great was their force that they rendered the giant utterly motionless.

The ogre did the unexpected and began to beg for his life.

“I was only guarding the forest, dutifully performing the task assigned to me by the god Enlil!”

Enkidu, however, urged Gilgamesh to slay him.

At this, the Humbaba cursed Enkidu:

“May you die before your friend Gilgamesh does!”

Then, Gilgamesh drew his axe and its blade thudded into the Humbaba’s neck. Meanwhile, Enkidu rammed his blade straight into the monster’s heart. And with a mighty thud, the giant fell into the ground like the mountain in Gilgamesh’s dream.

The two men pulled out the Humbaba’s entrails and severed his great tongue. After this, they cut down the tallest of the cedar trees.

Enkidu said:

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“We shall use this to make a huge door and then send it as a gift to the holy city of Nippur.”

“Is this not the sacred city of the god Enlil?” Gilgamesh asked.

“Indeed it is, my friend.” said Enkidu.

And so they fashioned a raft from the cedar trees and carrying with them the severed head of the Humbaba, the two sailed down the Euphrates and back towards home, back towards glory.

During this entire heroic adventure, an admirer watched from a distance...

Chapter 5: Gilgamesh and Inanna

After the heroes' return to the city of Uruk, Gilgamesh bathed. During his bath, Inanna, the goddess of love, beauty, and warfare, and the daughter of An appeared before him. She was lovelier than any other goddess and her voluptuous figure incited lust. And there she was standing before Gilgamesh with an offer no mortal could refuse:

"I shall give you riches and pleasures," she said. "More than you could ever dream of. If only you would take me as your wife."

As it happens, Inanna was notorious for making lovers out of any man and any beast. Then, after she had tired of them, she would abandon the poor heartbroken lovers to their ugly fates.

Gilgamesh declined her offer.

"I do not wish," said he, "to suffer the same fate as poor Dumuzi, your former lover, whom you so badly mistreated. No, I do not wish to be your lover. Not for all the riches and pleasures in the world."

At this, the goddess was furious. She vowed that Gilgamesh would be sorry for humiliating her.

The spurned Inanna then went up to her father An's heavenly abode and asked that she may borrow the Bull of Heaven, Gugalanna.

At first, the father of the gods refused. He did not like the idea of using the Gugalanna for carrying out his daughter's murderous whims, but Inanna said:

"If you continue to refuse, I shall open the gates of the underworld to release all of the dead. So that they may outnumber your beloved mortals and devour them!"

An then relented and gave to his daughter the bull's nose ring which will enable her to control it. Then, the scorned goddess brought the Gugalanna down to the earth where it went on a killing rampage.

The great bull stamped its foot once and lo and behold! The ground cracked open and a hundred of Uruk's bravest warriors fell into the hole. The bull's foot went down the second time. And this time, two hundred soldiers fell into the abyss. And finally, the bull's foot went down the third time. This time, it was Enkidu who almost fell into the chasm. But being a fast thinker, he grabbed the Gugalanna by its horns.

"Gilgamesh!" he cried. "Hurry!"

At this, the king of Uruk took his blade and rammed it deep into the bull's neck. Then, both Gilgamesh and Enkidu ripped out the Gugalanna's heart and offered it up to Shamash.

Watching by the walls of Uruk, the goddess Inanna screamed with fury at the death of her father's bull. Enkidu then tore off one of the bull's legs. It was huge and black as onyx. He threw the dead limb right into the goddess's face.

He yelled: "If I could, I would tear off your limbs just like I had done to this bull!"

Then Inanna picked up the bull's severed leg, called all of her female devotees and together they wept over the bull's leg.

As she did this, the king of Uruk threw a banquet in honor of their victory and in honor of the men who had died during the giant bull's attack.

That night, Enkidu slept. It was his turn to have a dream...

Chapter 6: Enkidu's Fate

"Gilgamesh." Enkidu said. "My friend, last night I dreamt that the sun god, the earth god, and the father of gods met. They said that it is time for us to pay for our transgressions. The great god An said that we must be punished for killing the Bull of Heaven. The god Enlil insists that I must die for killing the Humbaba and cutting down the greatest tree in the Cedar Forest."

At this, Gilgamesh's heart filled with fear and grief. He began to weep.

"But it is not just! We did these things together. We murdered those beasts together. Why must you pay for our deeds and not I?"

Enkidu tried to comfort his friend but he himself could not bring himself to calm down.

The days passed and Enkidu's mind slowly became unhinged. He began cursing everything and everyone that had led him towards this fate, from the sun god who helped them in their quest, to the hunter who had discovered him in the watering hole, to the temple whore Shamkat who had seduced him to adopting the ways of man.

Through all this, Gilgamesh held his friend's hand. He said:

"My friend, my brother, whom I had loved like no other, pray do not forget the adventures that we have shared. And know that I shall never forget you too."

Enkidu started having terrible nightmares. He dreamt that an eagle with the head of a lion had swooped down to get him and though he cried and cried for his friend's Gilgamesh's help, the king of Uruk and his sworn brother had failed to come to his aid.

Though he did not mention it, Enkidu's dream troubled Gilgamesh deeply.

Then the sickness came. Enkidu was confined in bed for twelve days. He lay there helpless and in pain, suffering from febrile hallucinations. Gilgamesh remained at his side but in his delusions, Enkidu kept accusing Gilgamesh of having abandoned him.

This pained the hero deeply.

Finally, Enkidu died. And Gilgamesh's terrible days of mourning began.

Day and night the king of Uruk stood beside his friend's body to guard over it. He pressed his hand against his brother's chest and spoke to him, but alas, there came no reply. In his grief, Gilgamesh tore off his finery and his jewels and dressed in rags. He cut off his long, luxurious hair. Then he assembled the finest craftsmen of Uruk to fashion a great statue in the image of his friend Enkidu.

Gilgamesh then continued with his travels alone. He wandered off into the wilderness. His grief over the death of his friend transformed to fear. The hero of Uruk who was once unafraid of death, who had toyed with the very idea of it, dreaded the day when he too would have to share the same fate as Enkidu.

Finally, Gilgamesh made it his quest to find the secret that would make all men immortal. And in his journeys, he met the one man whom the gods had gifted with immortality, the great man who built the great boat, Utnapishtim.

Chapter 7: Inanna's Descent

Inanna's Descent:

Irkalla was a land of no return. Nevertheless, the goddess of love and beauty and warfare was determined to go to the underworld to visit her sister. Before she left, she instructed her servant to speak with the gods Enlil, Enki, and Nanna the moon god for their help should she fail to return. After all, the rules of the underworld stated that anyone who enters it shall not be allowed to leave. This rule excludes messengers appointed by the gods.

For her visit to the underworld, Inanna clad herself in a grand lady's dress, a turban, a wig, and a necklace made of lapis lazuli. Her breasts were covered with shimmering beads and a golden ring glittered on her finger. In her hand, she held a rod of crystal. Her dress was deemed unfit for the underworld. This made her sister, the goddess of the underworld, suspicious and so Ereshkigal told her gatekeepers: "Have Inanna hand over her crystal rod."

When told by the doorkeepers that she must hand over her rod, she vehemently refused.

"What rights have you to take my belongings?" she asked.

"These are simply the rules of the underworld," explained the gatekeepers.

Having no choice, the goddess of love and war obliged. And so she was able to pass through.

In order to reach Ereshkigal, Inanna must pass through seven gates, and before entering each gate, the gatekeepers would ask her to remove a piece of her clothing. These were no ordinary articles of clothing for they carried Inanna's power. And so, as she disrobed little by little on her way towards Ereshkigal's throne, her powers grew less and less.

Finally, Inanna was before her sister, the queen of the underworld, in all her naked glory. Ereshkigal despised her sister. Inanna was beautiful and her figure full and sensual, while Ereshkigal was her complete opposite. Moreover, the queen of Irkalla hated her sister because she was free to roam the heavens and the earth while she was confined to the dark and dreary underworld, bound by its rules. The living deities cannot even visit her in her throne.

Bitterly, she spoke:

"You drink beer while I drink muddy waters. You eat bread while I eat clay. You make love from one lover to the next while I sit here and weep for the young mortals who had died and the lovers they had left behind."

So her very own sister gazed upon Inanna with a look of such hatred and the Anna, the seven judges, condemned the goddess of love and beauty. They gazed upon her body so full of life and loveliness and their look brought death upon her. Inanna withered before them like a swiftly dying rose. And then her lifeless body was hung on a hook.

For three days and three nights, Inanna's servant waited and when her mistress did not return, she went to the temples of the gods Enlil, Enki, and Nanna and prayed for them to save the goddess.

Enlil and Nanna refused.

"After all," they said, "had the vain and foolish Inanna not brought this upon herself?"

However, Enki agreed to help her. He collected dirt from under the fingernails of the gods. Then, with it, he fashioned two figures, the gala-tura and the kur-jara, which were neither male nor female. These creatures were beautiful to behold and were designed to please Ereshkigal. Once she was appeased, she would ask the creatures to wish for anything, *anything* and the queen of the underworld would grant their desire. And so the creatures made for pleasure would say:

"Goddess of the Underworld, we ask only that you allow us to take Inanna's corpse with us."

But when the creatures reached Ereshkigal's throne, she was already beside herself with grief for what she had done to her sister.

"Take the corpse," she said. "Take it I beg you. If only taking it from my sight would relieve me of my pain."

And so the creatures took Inanna's corpse back to the land of the living where it was revived through the sprinkling of the Water of Life.

However, Ereshkigal's demons followed Inanna's corpse to the surface demanding that another body must take her place. For such was the law of the underworld.

They tried to take Inanna's servant, but the goddess protested as the maid was loyal to her. Then, they tried to take the goddess's beautician. Still, the goddess refused, for who would tend to her?

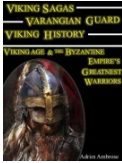
She offered, in her stead, the body of her then lover, Dumuzi. And so Inanna's unfortunate husband was dragged by the demons into the underworld.

Epilogue

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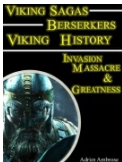
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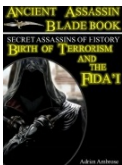
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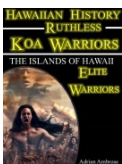
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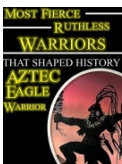
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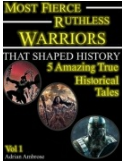


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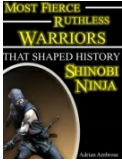
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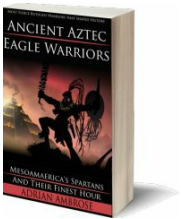
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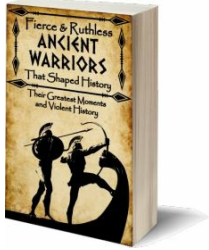
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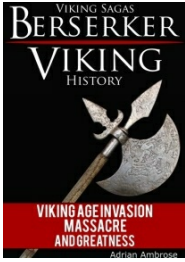
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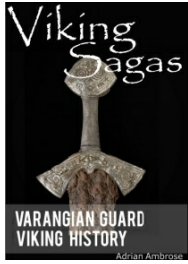


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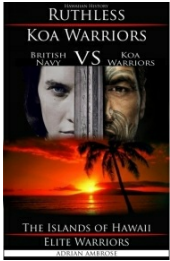
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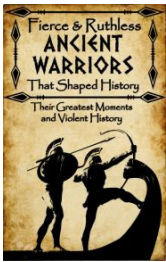
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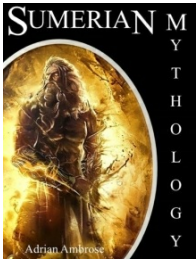


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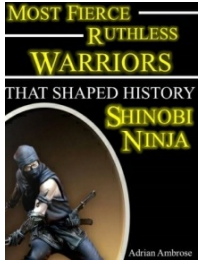
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